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Representative Zepnick responds to attempts to undermine city regulation of Uber and Lyft

In response to Assembly Bill 143 and Senate Bill 106, which seeks to designate the regulation of “transportation network providers” such as Uber and Lyft to the state level, Representative Zepnick (D-Milwaukee) has come out against this legislation.

Zepnick voted against the legislation, citing issues with the Bill taking regulatory authority away from local legislators and designating regulation to the state level. While voicing support for the continuation of local regulatory authority he pointed to the Milwaukee city ordinance that went into effect on September 1st, 2014 and has since served as an ideal statute for regulating transportation network provider services in the city.

He stated that his foremost concern with the proposed legislation is safety, which primarily stems from the issue of thorough criminal background checks. In order to create a safe environment for customers, as well as other motorists, there must be city regulated background checks before hiring and possibly before each two year license renewal. He also spoke against state regulation and the safety concerns which would be raised.

In creating the ordinance, the Milwaukee Common Council chose to enact a regulatory scheme that treats these providers in a similar manner to traditional taxi companies, thereby creating a level playing field for all Public Passenger Vehicle providers (PPVs) in Milwaukee. Unlike the proposed legislation, Milwaukee’s ordinance licenses both drivers and vehicles thereby ensuring that consumers are being transported both in a safe vehicle and by a safe person. Safe vehicles are ensured by requiring a randomly-scheduled vehicle safety inspection during each two-year license period and safe drivers are ensured by requiring the drivers to undergo a thorough, city-conducted annual background check.

Zepnick believes that in order to ensure optimal quality of safety among Milwaukee’s public passenger vehicle providers there must be: city regulated criminal background checks among drivers, randomized vehicle safety inspections, and creating a fully-staffed state process by which to resolve complaints about drivers and vehicles as well as the company as a whole.